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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: CORRECTED DATES: GERMAN VIEWS ON MARCH 28-29  
GYMNICH

REF: STATE 30504

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) PolOff discussed German reaction to REFTEL points with MFA European Correspondent Michael Fluegger on March 26 points regarding the March 28-29 GYMNICH meeting.

Western Balkans  
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¶2. (C) Fluegger noted that Germany and the U.S. are on the same page "on all points" regarding Kosovo and the Western Balkans. He was pleased that Bulgaria, Hungary and Croatia had recognized Kosovo's independence, and noted that Germany is pushing Portugal and Malta to act "sooner rather than later." Fluegger also noted that Germany will continue to stand firm against Serb attempts to undermine Kosovo's viability. Regarding the Macedonian name issue, Fluegger stated that "everyone is hopeful" that an agreement can be reached prior to the NATO Summit in Bucharest.

Middle East  
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¶3. (C) Fluegger said Germany will continue to press for additional assistance for Lebanon, and noted support for the Arab League initiative as well. He acknowledged the U.S. point on discouraging EU member state engagement of Syria, but noted that Germany and others still have a different view. He asked rhetorically how EU countries can adequately press Syria to end its interference in Lebanon from afar, to which PolOff replied that Germany's ambassador in Damascus was certainly up to the job. Fluegger did state, however, that there may have been too many EU ministers visiting Syria of late, and thought that Solana, while perhaps not the sole interlocutor, should take the lead.

China  
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¶4. (C) Regarding China, Fluegger expressed agreement with many of REFTEL's points, and pointed to FM Steinmeier's phone conversation on March 25 with his Chinese counterpart in which he pressed for increased dialog. He added that Germany and other EU ambassadors in Beijing are requesting direct access to Lhasa and other affected areas. Fluegger also noted that the Dalai Lama will be visiting Berlin next month. Chancellor Merkel will be in Latin America during that period, but a meeting with FM Steinmeier "cannot be ruled out."

Russia  
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¶5. (C) Fluegger said that, like the U.S., Germany -- and the EU -- is in a period of "taking stock" regarding Russia and

is interested in how things may shake out after Medvedev's inauguration. Regarding missile defense, Germany continues to expect resolution of the matter at NATO and claimed that not even Poland and the Czech Republic are able to "speak with one voice" on MD. He said Germany shares U.S. views on Russia's elections and backsliding on human rights and noted Medvedev's recent speech regarding rule of law and other issues as a reason to hope for some improvements. Regarding Russian actions in the Western Balkans, Fluegger said Germany is doing all it can to support the pro-EU and pro-democratic forces in Serbia. If they win in May, he said, than Russia will "quickly lose interest" in the region.

TIMKEN JR